

Plan Would Strengthen Teacher Preparation

Senate Bill 51, sponsored by Senator Sokola, Raises the Bar on Educator Prep

Dover, DE – Following on a pledge he made in his [State of the State 2013](#), Governor Jack Markell announced measures to strengthen licensure requirements for prospective teachers while improving teaching training and better tracking data on teacher preparation programs.

“Teacher quality is the single most important school factor in a child’s academic success. Nothing contributes to student learning as much as a quality teacher,” said Governor Markell. “We want new teachers ready to make a difference the first day they step in the classroom. A key part of raising the education profession is how we attract the best candidates into teacher preparation programs and make those programs as strong as possible. Our state’s success in the future is dependent on how well we educate our children today.”

[SB51](#), sponsored by Senator David Sokola, would raise the bar for entering the teaching profession, with required content exams and performance assessments before licensure; improve teacher training with high-quality, student teaching experiences, and better track data on our preparation programs, with required reporting of program effectiveness.

“I hope this legislation will help ensure the new teachers we’re sending into our classrooms are as prepared as we can possibly make them for the challenge of preparing our young people for competing in the global marketplace,” said Senator David Sokola, D-Newark, the bill’s sponsor. “I think this new exam will help make sure those teachers have the skills they need to do that most important job.”

“We must ensure those entering our classrooms are prepared from Day 1. Since I have taken office, this need is something I have heard repeatedly from our educators, and this proposal includes feedback I have received from our Teachers of the Year,” said Secretary of Education Mark Murphy.

“The demands of teaching make in-depth, comprehensive teacher preparation essential,” said Frederika Jenner, President of the [Delaware State Education Association](#) (DSEA). “The time has come to involve working teachers as part of teacher training—who better for new teachers to learn from than their colleagues who teach well?”

“Governor Markell’s focus on improving educator preparation is much needed and it illustrates how Delaware is committed to providing the absolute best teachers for our students,” said John Sell, Delaware’s Teacher-of-the-Year 2013. “The teaching profession has changed dramatically in the 21st century, and it requires specialized skills covering a wide variety of areas. Ensuring our teachers enter the profession armed with those skills should be a key focus so that our students can receive the very best education possible. Preparing and retaining highly qualified teachers in Delaware needs to be a central focus if we aim to make our schools national models of excellence.”

Research shows:

The top education systems recruit and retain top educators: Only 23% of U.S. teachers come from the top third of college graduates compared to 100% in Singapore, Finland & Korea.

- **A significant portion of Delaware teachers are new to the profession, and the majority of those teachers were educated in Delaware:** 1 in 4 teachers employed in Delaware public schools have 5 or fewer years of education experience. Of those teachers, 59% received their bachelor’s degrees in Delaware.

- **New teacher turnover is significant, and state efforts to improve educator preparation lag the nation:** 2 in 5 new teachers leave teaching in Delaware within 4 years. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) has consistently given Delaware a “D-” for “improving teacher preparation,” placing Delaware in the bottom 8 states nationwide for addressing this issue.